

HAITI

Haitian Civil Society Organizations Discuss Blueprint for Action

Almami Cyllah, IFES-Haiti's Chief of Party, met with representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) and the international community during a conference in May 2004 in Haiti. Mr. Cyllah presented conference attendees with a blueprint for civic action to support judicial reform. To effectively promote judicial independence in Haiti, he argued that CSOs must develop a common strategic vision, create a broad coalition of all stakeholders and set objectives that will contribute to judicial reform.

Participants, including IFES' President Richard W. Soudriette, listened to four legal professionals debate the blueprint's content. They explored the ways that direct actors (magistrates, legal professionals and government employees) and indirect actors (university professors, CSOs, the private sector, the media and the international community) could contribute to judicial reform and underlined the importance of involving the public through an intensive media campaign. Following the debate, participants broke into three working groups to identify mechanisms for the practical implementation of the blueprint.

LIBERIA

Liberians Prepare for Post-Conflict Elections

After 14 years of civil war under Charles Taylor, Liberians are edging carefully towards peace and political stability with the signing of a peace agreement and the establishment of a transitional government in late 2003. The upcoming 2005 elections will be an important element of a strategy to establish democracy and ensure a lasting peace. In April 2004, IFES sent a mission to Liberia to evaluate the country's preparedness to hold elections in October 2005 and to identify the challenges they will face.

IFES' mission made three key findings. First, it is crucial that Liberians be involved in all aspects of preparing for the 2005 elections in order to accomplish a peaceful transition. Second, preparations must begin soon, and the electoral framework must be set – and endorsed by key stakeholders – no later than October 2004 to allow sufficient time to prepare. Third, the international community must make available all assistance needed to create conditions for the best possible transition.

The challenges facing Liberians are many. Not only must they build an electoral system that can bring free and fair elections but they must also disarm some 60,000 combatants and find a way for some 30% of the population – currently living as refugees or otherwise displaced – to participate in the elections. The choices Liberians will make before the end of this year must address these pressing questions.

KOSOVO

IFES Supports Democratic Dialogue in Kosovo

The recent ethnic violence in Kosovo highlights the importance of citizen dialogue in promoting the transition to a peaceful, multiethnic nation. In advance of the 2004 general elections, IFES has launched the Transitional Elections Resource Project (TERP) to provide CSOs with educational resources and funds that will help them to engage citizens, NGOs and the media in democratic dialogue about candidates and democratic institutions in Kosovo. IFES' aim is to encourage citizen participation in the elections and to develop citizen confidence in the electoral process and its conclusion.

TERP supports local citizen dialogue by providing educational resources such as research and targeted media programs designed to generate discussion. In addition, the project offers sub-grants to citizens' groups to support relevant programming. IFES is also providing micro-grants for local initiatives focused on women, young people and ethnic minorities. With these grants, three local NGOs (in Viti, Gjakova and Prizren) organized roundtables to discuss issues affecting the elections and to make recommendations. Roundtable topics included: "Open or Closed Lists?", "Civil Society and the Electoral System" and "The Electoral System Seen from Women's Perspective." These events were attended by NGO members, political parties, local media representatives and members of the OSCE Department of Elections.

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